

VZCZCXRO8548
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHYD #0026/01 0100923
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 100923Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8467
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE 0063
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YAOUNDE 000026

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/C AND AF/EPS
STATE ALSO FOR EB
STATE PLEASE PASS MCC
DAKAR FOR FCS MORRISON
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA ACTION OFFICERS
TREASURY ALSO FOR FRANCOIS BOYE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EINV](#) [EIND](#) [KMCA](#) [CM](#)

SUBJECT: CAMEROON'S NEW MINISTER OF ECONOMY: DYNAMIC AND
FOCUSED ON BUSINESS CLIMATE

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a January 8 courtesy call by the Ambassador, Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) Louis Paul Motaze highlighted the need for more decisive action to spur economic growth and improve Cameroon's business climate. He was anxious to engage on the MCC, which he planned to discuss with the Prime Minister. He identified infrastructure and agricultural modernization as priorities and hoped the 2005 census would be published in February. Dynamic and results-oriented, Motaze could be a strong ally in improving the country's investment climate and getting progress on key MCC economic indicators. End summary.

Economy

¶2. (SBU) Motaze hoped for 4.5 to 5.5 percent GDP growth in 2008. He was pleased that President Biya's New Year's speech stressed the need for action in pushing economic growth. Motaze urged patience in the GRC's economic approach to the economy, saying that he hoped for better prioritization and more action (enough studies have been done, he said), while recognizing that problems exist and corruption cannot be eliminated over night. He hoped to spur speedier decision-making, arguing it was better to make bad decisions and correct them than to make no decisions. Ambassador hoped the GRC would lighten the burdens on foreign investors, who are looking for concrete improvements. Motaze agreed there was an urgent need to improve the business climate, saying he would focus on reducing the time to open a business, improving the judicial process, and facilitating business finance.

MCC

¶3. (SBU) The MINEPAT Minister said he was attending a meeting called by Prime Minister Inoni on January 9 to discuss economic issues, including the MCC. Ambassador noted that the PM's office informed us it was taking the lead on the MCC (which was news to Motaze) and she emphasized the need to make progress on the MCC indicators. We do not need to see progress on all fronts at once, but are looking for concrete results in as many areas as possible and hope to see Cameroon get on track for MCC threshold status, Ambassador added. The Minister agreed there was too much confusion in the GRC's Washington lobbying efforts on MCC, and that the government's priority needed to be tackling its problems here

in Cameroon. He also saw a need for improved communication about Cameroon's achievements to date.

Planning

14. (SBU) The Minister's priority "road map" for 2008 focused on energy, roads, telecommunications, and special sector development (such as palm oil and wood). Agriculture needs to be modernized, with greater value added, he said. The government is reviewing what to do when the IMF/World Bank-backed Poverty Reduction Strategy Program (PRSP) expires on June 30, he said, concluding that the government will probably stay on track with the adjustment requirements of the program. He disliked the focus on poverty reduction, preferring to focus on wealth creation over a 10-20 year period.

Census

15. (SBU) Ambassador asked whether the results of the 2005 census will be released soon. Motaze said he had recently met with the head of the National Statistics Agency (under his ministry), urging her to better communicate to the public the difficulties encountered in finalizing the census. He acknowledged some problems with the UN Population Fund and finances but hoped the final census results would be published this February.

Comment

16. (SBU) While still new and largely untested in his

YAOUNDE 00000026 002 OF 002

current job, Motaze was refreshingly dynamic and somewhat maverick in his thinking. He came off as decisive, committed, and sure of where he wants to go. He was both eager and realistic about the MCC. He has a strong track record of delivering results as General Manager of the National Social Insurance Fund prior to becoming a minister in September 2007. Reportedly close to the President, with work experience in Cameroon Airlines and Cameroon Shipping Lines, and a French law degree, he could prove to be a strong ally in efforts to improve the commercial climate.
GARVEY